

2018 ANNUAL TRIPARTITE CONSULTATIONS ON RESETTLEMENT

“Towards Expanded and Effective Resettlement”

NGO STATEMENT

Elaborated by the international NGO Community under leadership of the 2018 ATCR Co-Chair
The German Caritas Association



We are gathered here in Geneva for the 2018 ATCR because we strongly believe in resettlement as an indispensable protection tool for refugees. The ATCR and its related fora serve the common goals of States, UNHCR, NGOs and humanitarian organisations to further the expansion and quality of resettlement. Sadly, global resettlement departures have seen a dramatic decrease in the last year. In some countries, we are simultaneously witnessing unfortunate tendencies to steer away from the original concept of resettlement as a durable solution and humanitarian tool. In these crucial times, we urge States, NGOs and UNHCR to live up to our collective responsibility by safeguarding resettlement as an important **protection tool for the most vulnerable groups in need of protection**. Resettlement is meant to be a durable solution for those who cannot return to their country of origin and who have no prospect of living life in dignity and peace in the country of refuge. Their profile, medical needs, age, gender, sexual orientation or other factors prevent them from finding adequate protection. Resettlement is for those with the fewest options. It is our common responsibility to support these especially vulnerable persons.

In this spirit, we highlight the value of close cooperation with **UNHCR as an indispensable partner** in the resettlement process. UNHCR together with governments and NGOs has worked to secure a high quality and protection centred resettlement response. Against this background, we are eager to engage in a productive conversation around the **strategic use of resettlement** at this year's ATCR. The strategic use of resettlement aims at enhancing protection for those refugees who will themselves not be considered for resettlement by ensuring that the use of resettlement facilitates States' ability to support other durable solutions. We invite governments to actively engage with UNHCR and NGOs in finding ways to use resettlement in a strategic manner while better coordinating their resettlement response with regional and local protection strategies to enhance protection conditions in countries of first refuge on a broader scale.

With the expected finalisation of the **Global Compact on Refugees**, this year marks the beginning of an intensified and more concerted international response to the ongoing displacement crisis. NGOs highly welcome the Global Compact on Refugees as an important step towards fairer, more equitable

and predictable global responsibility sharing. We urge governments to **live up to their commitments** made in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and provide resettlement places and other legal pathways on a scale that meets the annual resettlement needs identified by UNHCR. The projected 1.4 million people currently in need of resettlement make up only about 0.1 % of the population of over 900 million people of the European Union, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand taken together. We urge governments to keep recognizing the importance of expanding resettlement as one important instrument. Resettlement needs to complement effective asylum systems, regional humanitarian relief and support of political efforts to end conflicts that lead to flight and displacement.

With regard to the implementation of the commitments made in the Global Compact on Refugees, NGOs are ready to support and actively contribute to the development of **complementary pathways** so long as such pathways include minimum protection safeguards. We call on States to ensure that such alternative pathways are additional and increase the overall capacity for permanent legal admissions and do not replace or undermine existing state-led resettlement programmes. Particularly for Private or Community Sponsorship to become a success story, the ownership and expertise of NGOs as well as diaspora and refugee communities are needed. We therefore call on States to make use of this rich expertise and ensure broad community engagement when designing, implementing and monitoring such programmes. We point out that financial responsibilities have to be shared in a fair, appropriate and time limited manner between governments and sponsors to avoid overburdening them. Efforts to support refugees in their integration have to be equally shared in an appropriate way.

NGOs also want to draw attention to the need to further the inclusion of **refugee voices** on the local, national and international level when discussing, developing, implementing or evaluating resettlement programmes, as highlighted in the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. Refugee self-representation should be a given as it allows for and is an essential part of a self-determined life. Moreover, the inclusion of refugee voices is essential in ensuring that policies and programmes actually meet the needs of refugees. We are looking forward to discussing concrete ideas for and experiences in facilitating refugee participation in different ways in one of tomorrow's sessions and hope they will inspire all actors involved in planning and implementing resettlement responses. We highly welcome the participation of seven refugee representatives and their active contributions to this year's ATCR.

Resettlement needs of Syrian refugees remain at a particularly high level. We ask governments to maintain and expand their programmes to resettle refugees who have fled the Syrian crisis and share responsibility with major refugee-hosting countries in coping with the repercussions of this ongoing and tragic war. There are also other groups of **refugees in protracted and acute situations**. NGOs are highly concerned about the situation of refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia and Nigeria who have the highest projected resettlement needs on the African continent. We urge governments to rethink the composition of their intake and actively engage with UNHCR to explore ways to either expand or start resettlement from African countries as resettlement needs are substantially increasing. We are appalled by the detention of refugees and migrants in Libya and urge all actors to work closely together to prevent future detention and human rights violations and ensure access to protection. NGOs also want to draw attention to the ongoing serious situation of the Rohingya refugees. We call on UNHCR and States to look closely at the role resettlement could play as part of a support strategy and to explore how resettlement could be used strategically to protect the Rohingya refugees who fled to Bangladesh. We

furthermore draw attention to the inhumane situation of refugees sent to Manus Island and Nauru and call on all responsible actors and the international community to resolve this situation.

NGOs appreciate the efforts of the **European Union** and its Member States to increase European resettlement places, thus taking promising steps towards a more equitable international responsibility sharing in resettlement. As negotiations on the Union Resettlement Framework progress, NGOs call on the EU Council and the European Parliament to create a Resettlement Framework that ensures a protection centred, high quality resettlement response and increases the quantity of places, while ensuring access to asylum for those seeking to reach the EU's territory. The right to claim asylum and international protection for refugees must be safeguarded worldwide and remains independent from the existence of resettlement and other admission pathways. We call upon the EU and the Member States to focus efforts on becoming a leading actor in ensuring a global humanitarian and protection centred resettlement response.

The **United States** has a long and valued role as a leading resettlement country and its actions have a great impact on resettlement as a durable solution and protection tool. NGOs are aghast at the drastic decrease in resettlement arrivals to the United States. We are highly concerned about the discriminatory travel and refugee bans, the extraordinary slowdowns in resettlement processing and the resulting devastating effects on certain refugee populations in acute or protracted situations. While we recognize the need for high quality vetting procedures, NGOs are concerned that additional security checks and information-collection requirements, combined with reduced processing capacity have resulted in a significant slowdown in refugee processing. We urge the US to continue to demonstrate the global leadership that has made its resettlement programme one of the world's most successful.

NGOs welcome the **Canadian** government's multi-year immigration levels plan which provides a basis for planning. However, we are concerned about the low numbers of government-assisted refugees to be resettled according to this plan, and the imbalance between privately-sponsored and government-assisted refugees. We call on the Government to increase its commitment to UNHCR resettlement while continuing to resettle robust numbers in the Private Sponsorship Program which is an important vehicle for family reunification in Canada.

Migration has been, and will always remain part of our common reality. It is our shared responsibility as States, civil society and international organizations to work together in building inclusive and welcoming societies that empower citizens as well as newcomers. We call on each and every one to **counter and condemn xenophobia** and to take steps to foster a society that decisively stands up against hatred.

We look forward to the discussions of today and tomorrow. We hope that these discussions can take place in a constructive atmosphere of transparency and trust and with a shared commitment to the common cause.

The German Caritas Association would like to thank UNHCR and the German Federal Ministry for their cooperation and support during the German chairmanship of the ATCR. We look forward to continuing our partnerships with States, UNHCR, and NGOs in order to further expand and enhance refugee resettlement opportunities for some of the world's most vulnerable groups.